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ABSTRACT

A study examined the extent to which sex role identity and career indecision could be used as predictors of individuals' congruence with their environment. Holland's Self-Directed Search, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and the Career Decision Scale were administered to 84 male and 42 female undergraduates who had declared Animal Science majors at a large midwestern university. A discriminant analysis of the variables related to Holland's theory of person-environment congruence established that sex role identity and career indecision did not account for enough of the variance in congruence to make significant predictions on their basis. It was concluded that sex role identity and career indecision may account for only a small amount of the variance in congruence and that there are other factors that should be explored when helping individuals choose a vocation. It was acknowledged that the study was limited inasmuch as it was specific to a single university population and that it examined only one dimension of sex role identity. Further research should be based on a multifactoral approach to gender and that includes other measures of sex role identity incorporating more social or situational measures of the construct. (Contains 10 references.) (MN)

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Sex Role Identity and Career Indecision as Predictors of Holland's Congruence

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Abstract

The concept of person-environment congruence is central to Holland's model of career development. The present study was designed to determine the extent to which sex role identity and career indecision could be used as predictors of individuals being congruent with their environment. Holland's Self-Directed Search, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and the Career Decision Scale were administered to 84 male and 42 female undergraduates who had declared Animal Science majors. Environment code type was determined from the College Majors Finder. Discriminant analysis was utilized to analyze the data. Sex role identity and career indecision were not effective predictors of congruence.

Sex Role Identity and Career Indecision as Predictors of Holland's Congruence

A key concept in Holland's model of career development is that of person-environment congruence. Congruence is defined as the degree of match between personality and environment type as they correspond to one of Holland six code types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional). Holland posited that congruent individuals will be reinforced, satisfied and less likely to change environments than will persons that are not congruent. Person-environment congruence has been studied in both educational and occupational environments and has been linked to successful academic performance (Nafziger, Holland, & Gottfredson, 1975; Bruch & Krieshok, 1981) as well as positive employment outcomes (Thompson, Flynn, & Griffith, 1994).

Determining what variables help predict person-environment congruence has important implications for the field of career counseling. The present study was designed to explore the relationship between sex-role identity and career indecision in predicting congruence. Sex role identity and gender have historically played an important role in vocational decisions made by individuals. The women's movement in

the 1970's introduced a new area of sex role research related to careers. Many occupations that were considered traditionally masculine became open to women. The segregation of occupations into masculine and feminine categories is no longer viable in our society because it encourages vocational choices to be based on the status quo rather than on internal experience. The construct of sex role identity has been determined to have a significant relationship with general psychological functioning. Instrumentality has been found to have a positive relationship with self-esteem (Whitley, 1983) and a negative relationship with such constructs as depression and anxiety (Grimmell & Stern, 1992). Few studies, however, have explored how the construct of sex role identity relates with other constructs related to career decision making. In the present study instrumentality and expressiveness, as measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and level of decisiveness, as measured by the Career Decision Scale, were used as predictors of individuals' choice of a major that would typically be considered masculine.

Participants and Method

Participants were 126 students enrolled in Animal Science core courses at a large Midwestern University. All participants had declared majors in Animal Science

related fields. Participants completed the Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1979), the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981), the Career Decision Scale (CDS) (Osipow, Carnay, & Barak, 1976) and a demographic questionnaire in conjunction with an ongoing assessment of instructional outcomes and effectiveness within their academic department. Eighty-four males and 42 females completed the materials. Participants ages ranged from 19 to 30 years (M=20.5). The ethnicity of the participants was 90% White, 9% Native American, and 1% African American.

The Animal Science major was determined to have a first place Holland code of realistic, and a second place code of investigative according to the College Majors Finder (Rosen, Holmberg, & Holland, 1987). Participants determined to be congruent with the Animal Science major were those who attained SDS scores of realistic first and investigative second or investigative first and realistic second.

Results and Discussion

Means and standard deviations for the Certainty and Indecision scales of the CDS and the Instrumentality (Masculinity) and Expressiveness (Femininity) scales BSRI are presented in Table 1. Results of discriminant analysis of variables related

to Holland's congruence revealed that sex role identity and career indecision did not account for enough of the variance in congruence to make significant predictions. The value of Wilk's lambda calculated for the function was 0.977, distributed as a χ (4, N=126)=2.723, $p<.05$. The null hypothesis of equity of group means for congruence can be accepted.

These results indicate that sex role identity and career indecision may account for only a small amount of the variance in congruence and that there are other factors that should be explored when assisting individuals in deciding on a vocational choice. One limitation of the present study is that it is specific to a single university population. Another limitation of the study is that it examines only one dimension of sex role identity. More recent theories of sex role identity advocate a multifactorial approach to gender which examines other personality characteristics beyond the constructs of instrumentality and expressiveness (Deaux & Major, 1990; Spence, 1993). Future research could include other measures of sex role identity which incorporate more social or situational measures of the construct.

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Table 1

Group Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Congruent (n=26)		Non-congruent (n=100)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Certainty	6.80	1.05	6.42	1.31
Indecision	26.76	8.37	27.05	8.61
Instrumentality	5.15	0.42	5.17	0.72
Expressiveness	4.73	0.48	4.83	0.65